



Republic of Ghana

Helping Children Learn in Ghana



Lessons Learned from QUIPS*

***Quality Improvement in Primary Schools**



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Helping Children Learn in Ghana

Lessons Learned from the Quality Improvement in Primary Schools Program (QUIPS)

**Ghana Education Service
USAID/Ghana**

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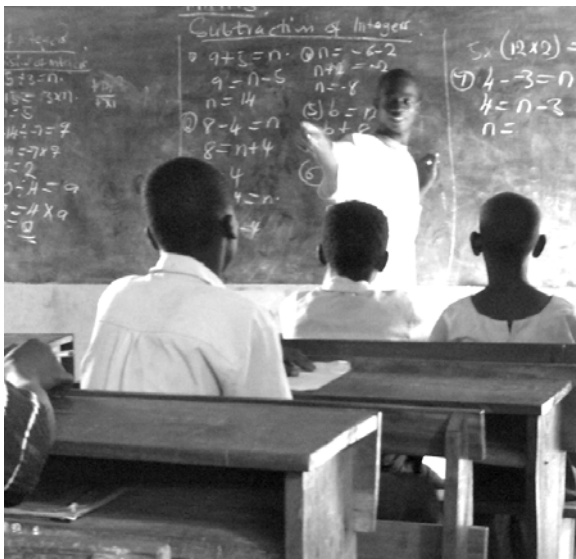
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1:	
A LOOK AT WHAT INFLUENCES HOW CHILDREN LEARN	1
Chapter 2:	
THE QUIPS PROGRAM AND WHAT WAS LEARNED ABOUT LEARNING	5
Chapter 3:	
CHILDREN – THE HEART OF EDUCATION REFORM	10
Chapter 4:	
THE POWER OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES	14
Chapter 5:	
TEACHERS HAVE THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB IN THE WORLD	20
Chapter 6:	
THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT	26
Chapter 7:	
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	29
Annex:	
A LITTLE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT QUIPS	30

Chapter 1:

A LOOK AT WHAT INFLUENCES HOW CHILDREN LEARN



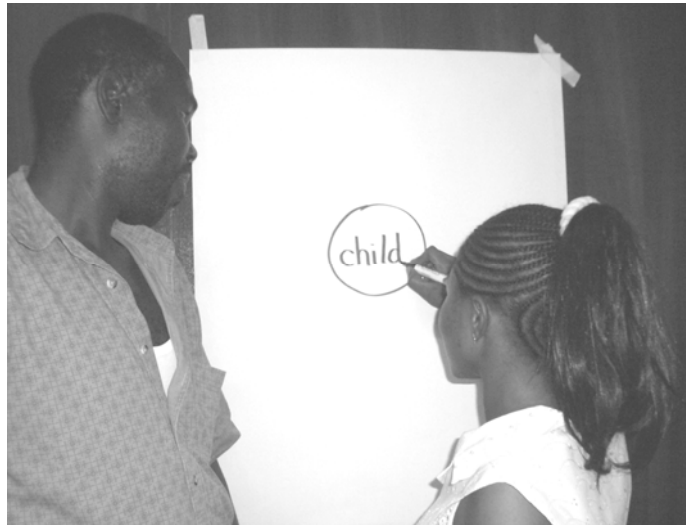
Many of us think that helping our children to learn well in school should be quite straightforward: we just have to make sure that schools have good teachers, enough books, adequate buildings and furniture, and make sure that our children are there and ready to learn.

But the truth is ...it is not that simple!

Here is an activity that you can do on your own, or better still with a group of people. You will need paper and pencil (or cardboard and markers if you are doing it with a group). If you decide to do it with people who do not read well you might consider doing it outside, using a stick and maybe some ash from a fire to draw on the ground. As you go through the exercise, ask them to choose a symbol - something from the environment like a flower or seed pod or stone to represent each new idea. Keep track of what the symbols represent.

Since the child is the most important person when we talk about education let's start there.

Draw a circle in the middle of the surface you are using (paper or ground). Label it 'child.'



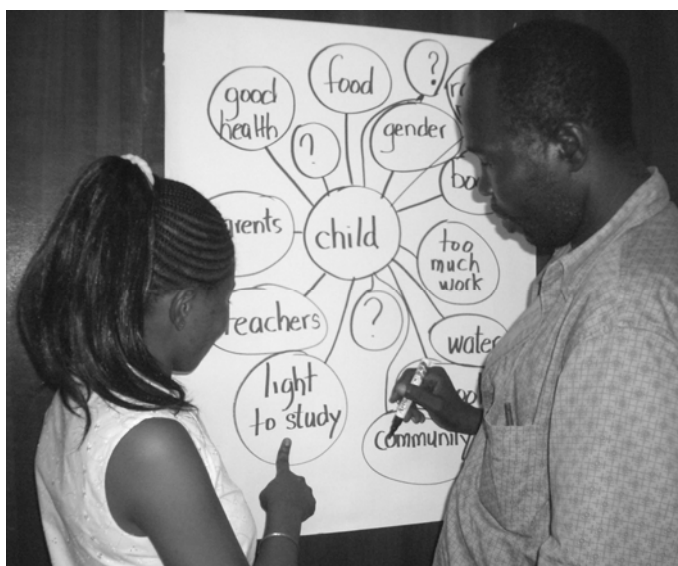
Now think of all the things that could influence how well that child will be able to learn in school. Here are a few ideas to start with:

- food – is he or she too hungry to concentrate?
- teachers – does the school have enough teachers?
- books – are there enough textbooks and other material to help him or her learn?
- water – is there safe drinking water available?

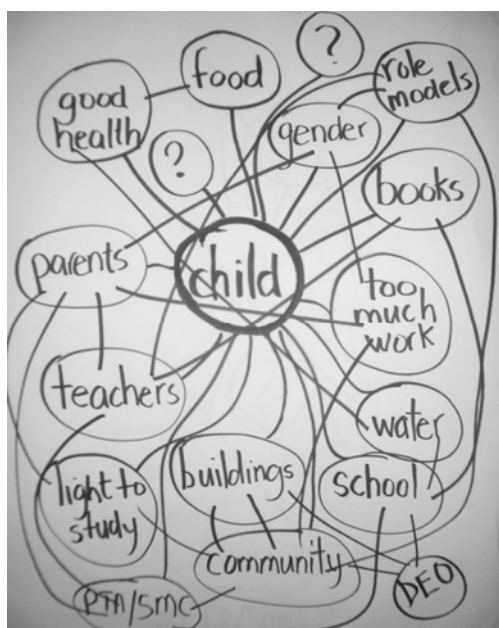
For every idea you think of, draw a new circle, label it* and connect it to your 'child' circle. When you have run out of ideas turn to the next page.

* This is where to use the objects people have chosen to represent their ideas.

Did you think of all these factors? What other ideas did you come up with?



Now draw a line between all the factors that are related to each other.



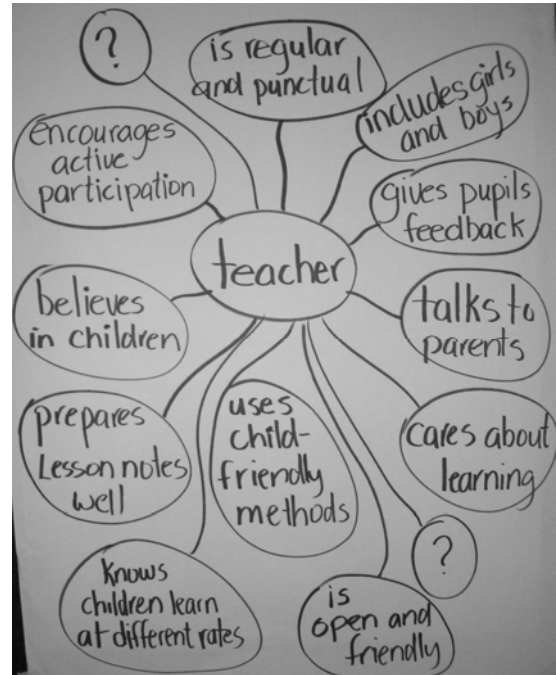
For example, good health will connect to food and water. Similarly, books, teacher, and school go together - as will parents, community and school. What other things are connected to something else? Very soon you will have lines going all over the place.

But we are not finished yet. We need to look at each of the circles individually. Let's start with teacher. What does the

child need from his or her teacher? Does it make a difference if the teacher uses child-centered teaching strategies, lets children know they are important and encourages them to be actively involved? What happens if the teacher just stands at the front of the class and talks? Or worse, doesn't teach at all?

Each of the circles you have drawn represents a teacher skill that influences how children learn. Go back to each one and think about how it can affect the child's learning. Add more circles as you think of new ideas. Every single factor is important. And none of them stands alone.

What is clear now is how very complex education really is, and how many different people have an important role to play.



The role of this book is to help everyone think about what they can do to make a difference. Quality education for children depends on everyone. Each one of us must start thinking about what we can do to make things better. In other words, each of us must start thinking in terms of:

Helping Children Learn in Ghana

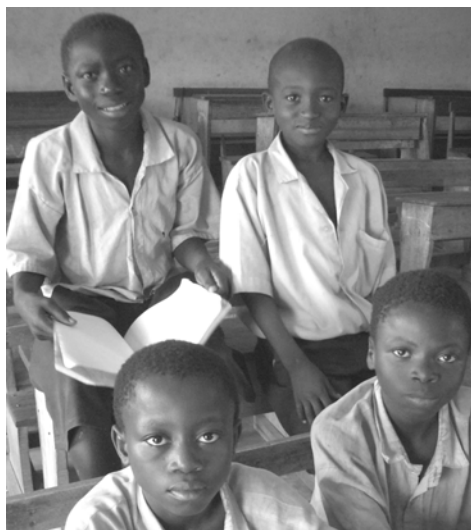
Chapter 2:

THE QUIPS PROGRAM AND WHAT WAS LEARNED ABOUT LEARNING

QUIPS stands for Quality Improvement in Primary Schools. It was a program implemented by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and USAID/Ghana to support fCUBE (free Compulsory Universal Basic Education), Ghana's primary education reform.

The QUIPS program was implemented in every district of the country. Three schools in each district participated directly but thousands of others benefited as districts shared the good practices that teachers in QUIPS schools were using with other schools in the district. In addition, every School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) was helped to become more effective.

Experience has shown (and you have just discovered for yourself) that there are many factors that influence how well children learn. QUIPS tried to support the three major groups of stakeholders most closely involved: communities, teachers and the GES.



In March of 2005, the GES and USAID/Ghana decided to go back to have a good look at what QUIPS learned about factors that influence how children learn. An evaluation team traveled around the country talking to children, parents and teachers, community members and district officials. This book is a summary of what the team learned about learning in primary schools in Ghana.



KEY FINDINGS ABOUT CHILDREN

Children told the evaluation team that they learn better when:

- they are not hungry or tired;
- they believe they can succeed;
- they have their basic school needs (pencils, paper, etc.);
- they know how they are performing in school;
- they are actively involved in the lessons being taught;
- they can ask questions;
- they are studying things that are related to what they already know;
- they have classrooms with adequate furniture;
- the teacher notices when they are trying hard;
- they go to school everyday;
- they have good role models; and
- they know their parents and teachers expect them to succeed.

Ghanaian children have one important thing in common: they all want to *“be somebody.”* They know that education will open the doors to their future.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT PARENTS

When parents value education they send their children to school. They also:

- ensure that chores are not so heavy that children are too tired to learn;
- provide food so the children have energy to learn;
- make sure their children have their basic school needs;
- provide light for study at night;
- visit their child’s school often; and
- get involved in the SMC or PTA activities.



KEY FINDINGS ABOUT COMMUNITIES

All over Ghana, community awareness about the value of education is growing. Communities are developing a sense of school ownership. Each school has a PTA and an SMC. Here are some things that PTAs and SMCs do to improve their school:

- the SMC/PTA meets regularly and works to bring community and teachers together;
- the SMC/PTA understands its role and responsibilities;
- the SMC/PTA helps teachers with housing, food or their farms;
- the SMC/PTA organizes communal labor to maintain the school;
- the SMC/PTA undertakes activities to increase enrollment;
- the SMC/PTA members visit the school to monitor teacher attendance and find out about what the school needs;
- the SMC/PTA organizes study groups at night;
- the SMC/PTA acts as advocate for the school; and
- the SMC/PTA encourages local businesses to help the school.



KEY FINDINGS ABOUT TEACHERS

Teachers have the most important job in the world. Without them, children can not learn what they need to know as adults in a modern world. Here are some lessons QUIPS learned about effective teachers:

- they plan their lessons carefully;
- they think about how they can meet the needs of pupils who are struggling;
- they use a variety of child-centered teaching and classroom management strategies;
- they give children feedback to let them know how they are doing;
- they encourage children to keep trying;
- they use teaching and learning materials to actively involve children;
- they create open, friendly classrooms where children are free to ask questions;
- they give children time to think about a question;
- they stimulate children to think critically and creatively;

- they recognize that children can learn from each other;
- they come to school every school day and are punctual;
- they meet regularly with parents;
- they take advantage of professional training opportunities to improve their teaching; and
- they take pride in what they do and in the success of their young pupils.



KEY FINDINGS ABOUT SCHOOLS

The QUIPS Evaluation Team learned quite a lot about what schools do to improve learning:

- the school's head teacher provides effective supervision and support;
- the school provides school-based in-service training to help teachers learn new ways of teaching;
- the school creates a culture of active learning;
- the school provides enough textbooks and other teaching and learning materials;
- the school provides separate toilets for boys and girls; and
- the school provides safe drinking water for pupils.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICES

The District Education Office (DEO) staff is there to help schools provide quality education. The DEO contributes to pupil learning in the following ways:

- the Director of Education (with four assistant directors) oversees all the activities of the district office and education in all schools in the district;
- the Circuit Supervisors provide support and supervision for teachers and head teachers;
- the District Teacher Support Team (DTST) provides in-service training for teachers;
- the District Monitoring and Evaluation Team keeps track of performance across the district and collects information to help the district in its planning;
- the District Girls' Education Officer keeps a close eye on all things that affect the education of school-age girls; and

- the Community Coordinating Officer works with SMCs, PTAs and communities to make sure that they are actively involved in the management of their school.

There are many other officials ‘behind the scenes’ who also make important contributions, including those who keep accounts, gather statistics, work on planning or ensure that everyone has the materials and information they need.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES

The District Assembly (DA) is responsible for all district services, including education. The DA contributes to pupil learning in the following ways:

- the DA works very closely with the District Education Office - especially on issues related to school buildings;
- the DA has a group called the District Education Oversight Committee which oversees all education development activities - it manages the education development fund which is a part of every district’s budget;
- the DA provides scholarships to enable needy children to continue their education; and
- the District Assemblyman or Assemblywoman, as a member of the SMC, is a direct link between the community and the District Assembly.

A lot of people are involved in making sure that our children receive the quality education they need and deserve. The next few chapters go into more detail about the contributions each of these groups make. By the time you have read all the chapters you will be in a very good position to know what you can do to improve learning in your community and in Ghana.

If you would like to learn more about what QUIPS did to improve the skills of each of these groups, turn to the Annex at the end of this book. The Annex is called: *A LITTLE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT QUIPS*.

Chapter 3

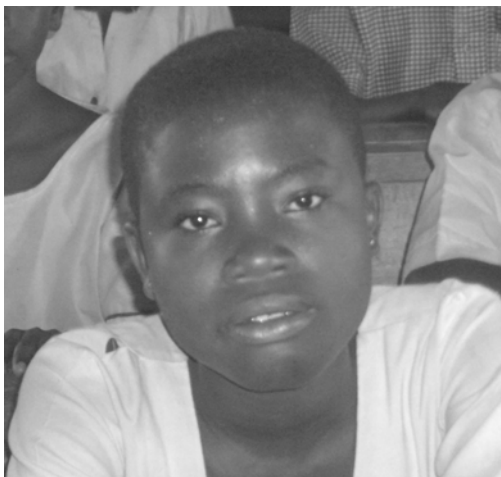
Children – The Heart of Education Reform

Children all over Ghana have one very important thing in common:

They all want to *“be somebody.”*

They know that the key to becoming *somebody* is education and they trust the grown-ups in their lives to help them make that dream come true.

Children and children’s learning are at the very heart of education reforms. But all too often children are not even consulted. Yet they certainly know what they need to be successful. When one Primary 6 girl was asked what makes learning hard in her school she was able to answer right away...



“NO teachers

NO books

NO food”

What a clear message!

WHAT DO CHILDREN BRING TO LEARNING?

We usually think about what teachers and parents contribute to schooling but what about the children themselves? What do they bring to the classroom that helps or hinders their learning?



Little children come to Kindergarten or Primary 1 full of expectations. They love their teacher and are like sponges, ready to absorb everything that comes their way. As they get older, their desire to learn becomes more focused. The experiences they have in school shape their

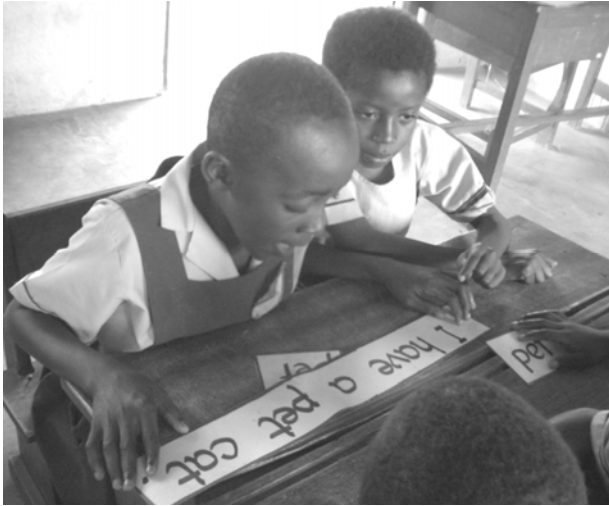
expectations and aspirations. Children who have met with success believe in themselves and thirst for more. That confidence makes all the difference!

The opposite is also true. Children know that when they are tired - because they have to do a lot of much heavy work before the school day even starts - they don't learn very well. And they know that when they are hungry it is very hard to concentrate.

Also when children repeatedly do poorly, they begin to believe that they cannot learn well. This is especially true for girls. Soon they start to miss school days and all too often, stop coming to school.

Here are some other things children have said make a difference in how well they perform in school:

- They learn better when they have their basic school needs (exercise books, pens, uniforms, etc.) provided by their parents or someone else who cares. When you have to wait to borrow a pencil from a classmate you miss a lot of what is going on in the lesson.
- They learn better when they are actively involved in the lesson, when they have to think and when they have materials to handle. For example, it is much easier to understand measurement when a child gets to fill different size containers with sand or water than to just talk about it.
- They learn better when they can ask questions without worrying about how the teacher will react or whether their classmates will laugh at them for being curious or for making a mistake.



- They learn better when what they are studying is related to what they already know. When new ideas build on old ones, things just make more sense to them.
- They learn better when they have classrooms with adequate furniture so they can concentrate without being too uncomfortable.

- They know when their teachers are teaching well. They love to be noticed by the teacher when they are trying hard, even if they are not getting the right answer. And they are very sad when the teacher does not come to school regularly. It makes them feel that they can't be very important and it discourages them. But they also recognize that teachers are learners too. One girl said that even though the teachers were absent because of training she didn't mind because: *"...they teach us better when they return."*
- They know that they do better when they go to school everyday. When they have to miss school because they are sick or they have to help their parents on the farm or to sell or to look after the younger children they know they fall behind. Once they are too far behind, they give up. That is the beginning of the end of school for many of them. Again, girls too often are affected this way.

- Children are more likely to be motivated when they have educated and successful role models. For children who live in urban areas good models are not so hard to find. However lots of children in remote villages may not get to see how education helps people get to be "somebody." That is slowly changing. These days nurses in rural health clinics are showing a lot of girls what is possible. More and more chiefs and other village leaders are educated. Of course teachers have the potential to be very powerful role models. We will talk about teachers and their role a little later.





Perhaps what makes the biggest difference for children is knowing that their parents and teachers believe in them and expect them to succeed.

Adults often forget one very important thing – children learn a lot from each other and often they can teach adults

too. One teacher told the evaluation team... *"Children are able to share ideas that sometimes teachers are not even aware of."*

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS TO REMEMBER?

Children bring a great deal to their learning.

Ask children what they need.

They will tell you.

We must include children and their ideas
to make schools better places for them to learn.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The next chapters will give you some ideas about how YOU can make a difference.

Chapter 4:

THE POWER OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

In the olden days children learned what they needed to know from their parents. Boys went to the fields with their fathers. Girls helped at home with smaller sisters and brothers and learned how to look after the house and family.

In the modern world this is no longer enough. Knowing how to read and write, do arithmetic and learning about how the world works is more and more important. Education is now absolutely essential for success, whether a child grows up to be a farmer, a business person, a soldier, a teacher or any other professional. And of course, most children will be parents one day, and will need to be able to help their own children learn.

THE SPECIAL ROLE OF PARENTS

More and more parents understand the value of education. They are sending their children to school, trusting that they will learn what they need to know to become educated and productive adults.



When parents value education they send their children to school. They have high expectations. If they are disappointed because the school is not doing a good job they sometimes become discouraged. They may even decide not to send the younger ones. Some argue that: *"If you send your cattle to the bush and they do not come back, you do not need to send more."*

Sometimes parents forget that they have an important role in their children's education. Providing adequate nourishment is the starting point. Children are like any machine – without fuel they don't go very far. This can be a big challenge in areas where there is little food available. When food is short, children, especially girls, don't always get priority. Parents need to struggle to find enough for the children to eat.

Making sure that children have the basic school needs – pencils, exercise books, and uniforms – is also important. People sometimes complain that they can not afford such things. But when they stop to consider how much money they spend on other things like funerals or weddings, they begin to realize that the cost of schooling is really very low.



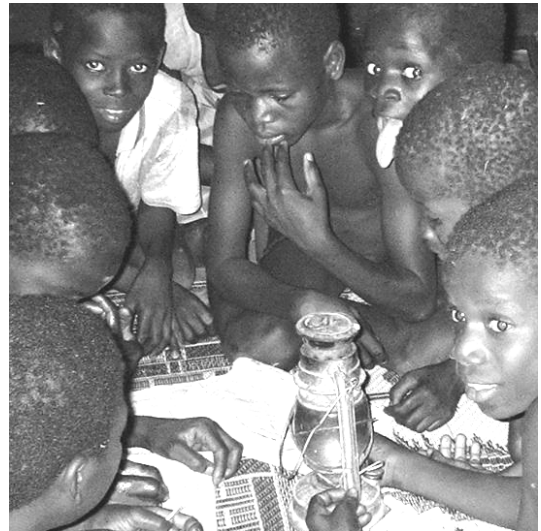
Here are some other things that parents do that make a difference for their children's education.

When parents stay informed about their children's progress by checking exercise books for the teacher's mark (such as an **X** or \checkmark) and talking to the teacher, the child realizes that his or her parents really care about school. Something as simple as regularly visiting the school is extremely important. In more and more communities regular visits to schools by

parents is becoming common.

One mother said: *"Previously there were difficulties between parents and teachers, now that is not so. Now we visit and when my daughter sees me she points and tells the others that I am there and she is proud."*

Making sure that children are able to do their homework and study at home is also very important. Many children said that they do not have light at home to study. In some places parents and children organize study groups at night. If there is only one lantern at home this may be a good solution. Another is to make sure that children do homework before dark, when they can still see.



In some communities there is a study time organized at school after it closes, and teachers take turns staying at school to help children.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

All over Ghana community awareness about the value of education is growing. More and more people are realizing that they have a role to play in helping their school to provide quality education to their children. As they discover their 'inner voice' and begin to experience the influence they can have over how well their school performs they become more confident. Then they are encouraged to get more involved in how the school operates.



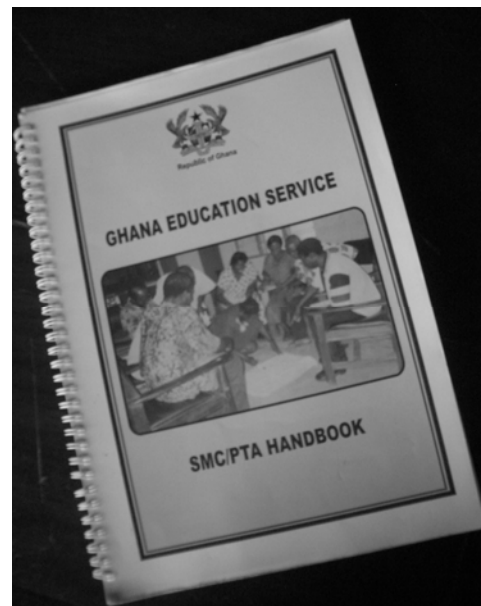
When this happens, the school usually does an increasingly effective job of educating their children. Communities are also realizing that when children are educated, everyone benefits. Families will be

better supported, communities will be more able to advocate for their needs and the quality of life for everyone will improve.

Communities are developing a sense of school ownership. We are all more likely to be concerned about and protect something that belongs to us. This is what is happening with schools across Ghana.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF SMCs and PTAs

Most schools have had a PTA for quite some time. Since the Government started implementing the fCUBE program, schools have also had SMCs. Together, these two groups of parents and teachers are learning how to really make a difference. The QUIPS program worked with the GES to help PTAs and SMCs learn about their roles and responsibilities. All over Ghana, parents and teachers are working together. And wherever this is happening schools are becoming more effective!



Good relationships between parents and teachers make a big difference. Teachers need to realize that parents appreciate their efforts and they, in turn, need to live up to community expectations. When communities provide tangible support (like helping with teacher accommodation, maintaining school buildings and repairing furniture) and teachers make efforts to communicate with parents about their children's progress, then everyone understands the benefits of working together. The SMC and PTA play a major role in how well the school operates and how well children learn. These groups build and support the relationship between community and school.

The SMC and PTA also have a responsibility to keep an eye on school activities. Everyone needs to see results of what they are doing - most of us tend to slack off a little if no one seems to care enough about what we are doing.

When the community members take an active role in helping solve school-related problems, they are viewed as partners by the school. When their schools do not have enough teachers, some communities in remote areas go so far as to recruit volunteer teachers.

A problem that persists in many schools is teacher attendance and punctuality. When teachers have accommodation in the community it is easier for them to be on time every day. Many communities help with that. If problems persist and all else fails, community leaders are learning that they can take action by going to the District Education Office and insisting that something be done.



Traditional and elected community leaders have a very special responsibility for the school. In many places the Chief and his Elders determine how things work in a village. Not only does the quality of leadership affect how the community operates, it has a direct as well as indirect impact on the school. In some places, special rules have been passed to protect children from influences like video-shows and other late-night activities.

Parents who understand the value of education are most likely to enroll their children in school and provide the basic school supplies they need. Sadly, however, there are still many children who are not in school. Sometimes they have lost their families and have no one to help them with their education. Sometimes their parents just do not understand the importance of education and the need to make sacrifices to make sure that their children go to school. Community leaders have a special role to play in educating parents about this important issue.

Here are some things that communities do to improve their school:

- They participate in SMC and PTA activities. The SMC and PTA meet regularly and work to bring community and teachers together to manage the school.



- They add to what government has provided to improve quality learning, by helping to provide materials like books or sports equipment.
- They develop and maintain school infrastructure by organizing communal labor. They repair equipment before it becomes too badly broken to be used, thus developing practices of regular maintenance.
- They undertake activities to educate parents about the value of education for their children and ultimately for themselves by sponsoring drives to increase enrollment.



- They support teachers by helping them with housing or food or going to their farms.
- They visit the school to monitor teacher attendance and find out about what the school needs.
- They organize study groups and ensure that there is light at night and supervision.
- They advocate for their school and, when necessary, meet with officials to take action.
- They encourage local businesses to help out. Sometimes businesses help by supplying building materials or things like exercise books or sports equipment. Often they give scholarships to help children continue beyond primary school. They realize that educated children will become their best employees in the years to come.
- Sometimes successful children from the community 'adopt' the school that gave them their first start. They provide books, sports equipment, etc.

Of all the lessons learned from the QUIPS Final Evaluation, one of the clearest is the important role that communities play in schools. As more people understand this and become actively involved in their schools, their children will benefit.

Chapter 5:

TEACHERS HAVE THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB IN THE WORLD



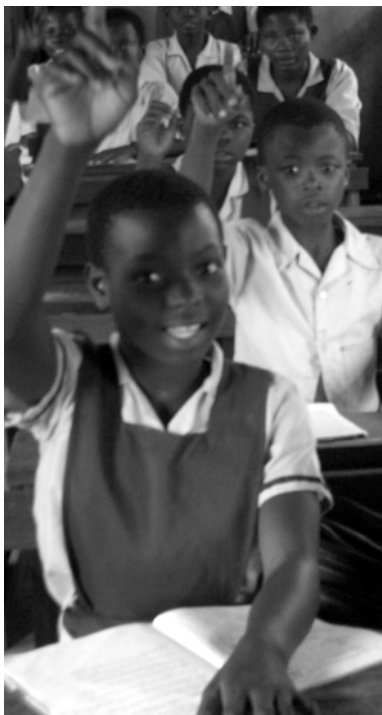
Teachers are the most critical part of the system that delivers education. Without them children will never learn to read, write and do arithmetic.

The combination of caring teachers and children who are eager to learn is the best recipe for quality education. For spice, add teaching and learning materials and good supervision. The learning stew is delicious!

Everyone: children, parents, community members, district education officials and of course teachers, have a lot to say about what teachers must do to improve learning for children.

A well organized, friendly and caring classroom environment invites children to be active and successful learners. When they feel free to ask questions and explore new ideas, learning becomes enjoyable and children want more.

The QUIPS Evaluation Team found that the most often reported influence on learning was how often and how effectively teachers gave children feedback on their progress. In several different ways, pupils indicated that when their teachers let them know how well they are doing and encourage them to keep trying, they learn to believe in themselves. This, in turn, pushes them to work harder. They said things like this:



"Our teachers encourage us to ask questions and they ask us a lot of questions. If we get it wrong they encourage us to try again."

The feedback has to be timely and realistic. It has to recognize that a pupil is trying hard even if he or she is not getting it right all the time. Teachers who help children to keep trying and help them to succeed build a child's confidence that they can do it.

When teachers say things like: *"That's a good try. Who can help him finish?"* or write notes in the pupil's exercise book like: *"You are showing improvement – keep up the good work!"* the child knows that even though s/he did not get it all right this time, the teacher believes that he or she can.

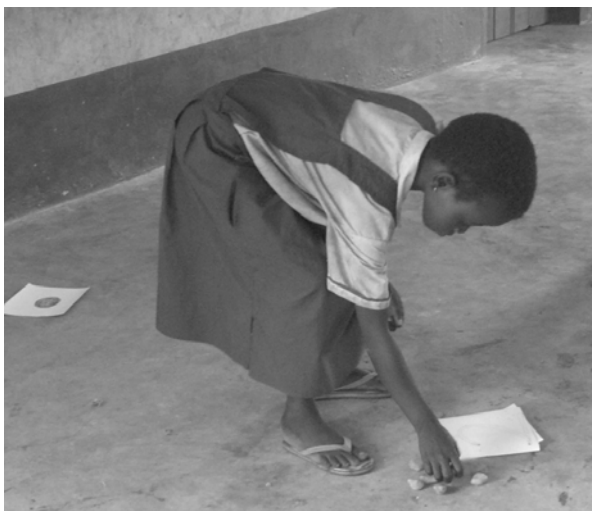
Of course, when the pupil is afraid of what the teacher will do if the answer is not right, then he or she probably will not even take a chance.

Pupils also really like it when teachers show that they understand that children learn differently. When one child was asked how school has improved since QUIPS, she said: *"It is better now because she teaches us well, she doesn't mind that we are not equal, she repeats if we don't understand."*

Parents also notice feedback by teachers. While many parents can not read, they do understand the 'teacher marks' (X or ✓) and they reported that they regularly check their children's exercise books to see what the teacher has marked. One mother said that sometimes when she sees that her child has many ticks she rewards her by buying her a gift.

Lessons learned about what effective teachers do to promote learning include the following:

- They use a variety of child-centered teaching and classroom management strategies.
- They plan their lessons carefully, making sure that they cover the syllabus. They think about exactly what they are going to teach in class and how they will involve the children in the learning. They think about what children already know and can do and try to build on it.
- They think about how they can meet the needs of pupils who are not learning as fast as other pupils. Sometimes they even provide extra classes. Needless to say parents are likely to appreciate this and realize how important the teachers really are.



- They use teaching and learning materials to involve children. These do not have to be very fancy. Bottle caps and pebbles make good counters and bits of cloth are useful for learning colors.
- They stimulate critical and creative thinking by asking questions like: *"What do you think?"* or *"What might happen if...?"*



- They create an open, friendly classroom where children are free to ask questions. They give children time to think about a question. They say things like: *"Think about it and I will come back to you."*
- Children said that when they are not afraid of being punished or ridiculed they can think better. This is especially so for girls, who are often not used to speaking out.
- They recognize that children can learn from each other. They create opportunities for this to happen by using different kinds of small group

instruction. This strategy has the added benefit of allowing the teacher to interact more often and more personally with individual children.

- They are regular and punctual. Sometimes this is very difficult, especially if they live far from the school or have to travel long distances to collect their salary every month. One very remote school has a schedule so that only one person at a time goes to collect his or her salary. The teacher leaves a good lesson plan so that the children have important work to do and another teacher can supervise and give help when needed.
- They interact regularly with parents. They share good news about progress and discuss problems that need the attention of home and school to solve.
- They take advantage of professional training opportunities to improve their teaching. This is often difficult because many teachers have very few chances to attend training courses. But more and more teachers are realizing that by sharing their challenges and successes with their colleagues, everyone benefits, especially the pupils.
- They take pride in what they do and in the successes of their pupils.

SCHOOLS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY TOO

For teachers to work effectively, schools must provide the necessary materials and structures to support their efforts. The QUIPS Evaluation Team learned a lot about what effective schools can do to help teachers do a good job.

Teachers need the 'tools of their trade.' They need textbooks and other teaching materials. Often they can make good learning materials from things in the environment, but that is not always so. The head teacher and the SMC and PTA have to make hard decisions about how to spend the little money the school receives. When they always think about what children need to learn, they will also be supporting the teachers. However, the teachers have to be clear about what materials are most important and make their ideas known.

In an effective school, the head teacher understands the needs of teachers. When valuable support and supervision is provided, teachers are encouraged to perform more effectively. Organizing school-based in-service training where teachers can share ideas, successes and problems is an expensive but effective

way of helping teachers to help themselves. The Circuit Supervisor or the District Teacher Support Team can also be called on to help with this.

An effective school has a full complement of teachers. Of course making sure that this happens is beyond the control of the school. Many remote schools have few teachers, and even fewer who are trained. Schools that ensure that pupil teachers and volunteer teachers receive training help both the teachers and pupils. A school visited by the Evaluation Team shows how new teachers, especially those with no training, can be supported.



The school has procedures in place that support the work of the new pupil teachers. They do lesson planning, have their plans vetted, discuss methods with trained teachers, borrow materials for a lesson, create learning materials, and create interesting quizzes and exams. In a short period the new pupil teachers learn to be proficient in the classroom.

All schools have their own culture that influences the way they do things. When that culture promotes active learning by children, teachers and the community, the result is likely to be better performance.

Good schools have enough textbooks and other teaching and learning materials and teachers who know how to use them well. It is very hard for a child to learn to read when he or she has no books to read. Reading is a skill – you cannot do well unless you practice.

Having a good school building and enough furniture also helps a lot. Both children and teachers feel more valued when their workplace is kept in good condition. Working with the community to make sure that repairs are done

before things are too run down is very important. It is easier to find one or two nails than a whole load of wood!



Access to good toilets means children waste less time leaving class to attend to their needs. This is especially true for girls, whose need for privacy increases as they grow.

Making sure that there is water available is important too. When children have to run far to drink, they sometimes forget to come back right away!

Effective schools make sure that teachers are well supervised and supported. Not only does the head teacher make regular visits to classrooms, he or she also calls on the district resources, the Circuit Supervisor or the District Teacher Support Team to help teachers do effective teaching.

Effective schools are places where children, teachers and members of the community feel welcome and safe and where learning is exciting.

How does your school compare?

What can YOU do to make your school more effective?

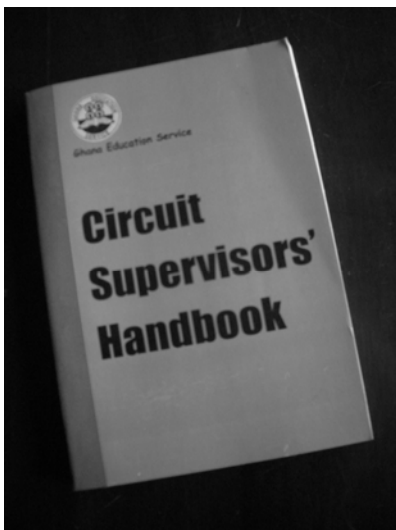
Chapter 6:

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT

These days, more and more responsibility for education lies in the hands of the district. Both the District Education Office and the District Assembly have roles to play.

The District Education Office (DEO) is the first, and for many people, the only point of contact with the Ghana Education Service. It is headed by the District Director of Education who is assisted by four assistant directors and several other officers who look after key areas and activities.

The QUIPS program worked with district officers to improve their management capacity. It also helped them become more effective at keeping track of how schools are performing and how children are learning. There are a number of people at the district office whose roles put them in direct contact with schools and communities. Others are less visible but just as important.



The GES and QUIPS prepared a detailed Circuit Supervisor's Handbook. It outlines all the different tasks the Circuit Supervisor must perform and suggests effective ways to go about doing them. These handbooks are at the district office and you can ask for one.

The Circuit Supervisor's job is to make sure that teachers and head teachers are doing a good job.

We all need a push now and then. As one officer said, *"When you want the tortoise to pull out its head from the shell you put fire in its shell but once you withdraw the fire the tortoise will crawl back in."*

The Circuit Supervisors are responsible for tracking the performance of pupils and teachers. They visit schools to observe classrooms and provide support to improve teaching. They check on lesson planning, pupil and teacher attendance records and results of children's progress. They also look at whether the school facilities are in good order. They report back to the District Director of Education so the district office can take action when necessary.

There is also a District Teacher Support Team, a group of master educators who can be called on to provide in-service training at the school. They can also organize training sessions for teachers at a cluster of schools. The District Training Officer coordinates these activities.

The District Girls' Education Officer (DGEO) has a very special role. Her job is to keep a close eye on issues that affect the education of school-age girls. She spends time helping parents understand why it is important to send their girls to school. She also works with teachers to help them make schools girl-friendly. The DGEO also works with parents when there is a problem that is preventing their daughter from attending school or being successful.

Both boys and girls benefit when schools are girl friendly. It is often said: *"A girl-friendly school is a child-friendly school."* To help create these types of schools, DGEOs from around the country developed a Resource Handbook for Girls' Education to guide this very important work.

Every district has a Community Coordinating Officer, whose role is to work with SMCs and PTAs and communities to help them become more involved in their school. This is the person to contact to learn more about how communities can work effectively with the District Education Office.

There are many other 'behind the scenes' people who also make important contributions by keeping accounts, gathering statistics, working on planning and making sure that everyone has the materials and information they need.

The District Education Office also works with local NGOs to make sure that any assistance to schools is well used. There are many groups in Ghana working with the education system to improve learning for children. Some, like UNICEF, are well known. But others, both Ghanaian and international, are just as helpful. If your school needs help you could approach the District Education Office for information about who might be able to help and what you should do about it.

The DEO has many other roles, one of the most important of which is to allocate teachers. This is often very difficult because the district does not control the number of teachers it has. (That decision is made by GES headquarters in Accra.) But they do their best to help schools. Another important responsibility is to ensure that schools have enough textbooks. Schools have a responsibility to make their needs known, and when textbooks are not available the SMC can approach the DEO to find out what can be done.

When communities have a serious school problem that cannot be solved locally, they can appeal to the DEO for help. Many SMCs have gone to the DEO to get help on issues such as teachers who refuse to attend school regularly. This is an example of how powerful communities can be if they work together with the right authorities.

The District Assembly (DA) is responsible for all district services, including education. The DA works closely with the DEO. Your community's Assemblyman or Assemblywoman provides a direct link between your school and the DA. The DA is responsible for major expenses like buildings. It also controls a special education development fund and provides scholarships to allow promising young people to continue their education at JSS, SSS and beyond. District Assemblies use these funds differently depending on what is most needed in their area.

The District Assembly has a special group called the District Education Oversight Committee. It ensures that children in the district are getting the best possible education. While there is never enough money to satisfy all needs, they try hard to be fair in supporting schools and education.

Chapter 7:

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As we have seen, making education work well is everybody's business. So what can you do?

Too often people think that someone else will do what needs to be done. Sometimes they say they are too busy. Some people don't think they know enough to help the school. Some people are shy. And sometimes schools are slow to take advantage of what parents and communities can do to help. Don't wait for someone else to take the lead. Take it yourself!

Every school has a PTA and an SMC. If you are a parent, get involved. Sometimes it seems like the same people are always running the committee or association. If this is the case, talk to someone you know and discuss what you can do. Offer to do a job that others do not want to do.

Teachers spend considerable time with your children. Do you know what they are doing in the classrooms? Visit the school. Arrange to meet the teacher and learn more about what your child will learn this year.

Is there something you can do to help the teachers? Sometimes they are far from their families. In rural areas they must farm too. But how can they do this and be helping your children? Maybe a group of parents can help them to farm.

Teachers can also be helpful to the community in many ways. Teachers who care about their children are natural leaders in their community and can also contribute to the community outside the classroom.

Well-educated children are tomorrow's leaders.
We must all do what we can to improve education.
Together we will build the future.

Annex:

A LITTLE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT QUIPS

QUIPS stands for Quality Improvement in Primary Schools. It was a program implemented by the Ghana Education Service and USAID/Ghana to support fCUBE (free Compulsory Universal Primary Education), the country's primary education reform. The objective of QUIPS was to increase effectiveness in the primary education system. The three original key program components included: (1) increasing community participation; (2) improving the quality of teaching and learning; and (3) improving education management.

The QUIPS program was implemented across the country. Three schools in every district participated directly but thousands of others benefited as districts shared the good practices that teachers in QUIPS schools were using to other schools in the district. In addition, every SMC and PTA was helped to become more effective in their school.

Each school community was involved in a two-year process which included residential and school-based training for teachers as well as community development activities. District officers were also trained in ways to help them more effectively support the needs of schools. In addition, the program worked closely with many communities to improve school infrastructure. In some places old classrooms were renovated, and in others new classroom blocks, latrines and teachers' quarters were built. In each case, the community made the decision about what it needed most and contributed by helping with the construction.

The sections that follow describe the three major components of the QUIPS program.

QUIPS COMPONENT 1: INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Communities include parents of children already in school as well as those not yet enrolled, the traditional and elected leaders, and all the other people who live there. Some communities are small remote villages where everyone knows everyone else. Some are a part of a larger place where there may be several schools.



And of course some are part of very big places like Kumasi or Accra.

QUIPS worked with communities to increase their participation in their own primary schools. They did this by increasing their awareness, responsibility and advocacy for education. They worked with SMCs and PTAs to enhance their participation in planning and monitoring school improvement efforts. One of the most important strategies used was the School Performance Improvement Plan. This was especially useful when communities were planning the use of micro-grants that QUIPS provided to help address school needs. Some bought textbooks, others acquired sports equipment, and still others repaired or expanded infrastructure. The choice was theirs.

QUIPS COMPONENT 2: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING



Teachers have the enormous responsibility of molding our future citizens. Sitting in classrooms across the country are Ghana's future leaders – teachers, doctors, business people, lawyers, politicians, and religious leaders. All of these people will look back one day and remember the teachers who helped them reach their goals.

This very important profession is also difficult, especially when there are so many challenges – very large classes, insufficient books, run down school buildings, and so on.

QUIPS worked with the GES to provide professional development training for teachers to help them be more responsive to the needs of children. Each school's staff members attended a twelve-day residential training session. In these sessions they worked on lesson planning, preparing teacher learning materials, and exploring instructional and classroom management strategies which they would later practice in their school-based sessions. Each school had a series of six school-based in-service trainings over the two years of the program at the school. These training sessions gave teachers an opportunity to share lessons learned in their own classes with experts who could offer ideas on new approaches to meet the needs of their pupils. They also worked more on preparation of teaching and learning materials and were able to compare with colleagues how well they were doing.



In addition to training courses, materials were developed to help teachers improve their classroom management. These materials will continue to be available from the District Education Office and Teacher Education Division of the GES. Many schools also benefited from new or improved infrastructure.

QUIPS COMPONENT 3: IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Management at both the school and district level was included in this component of QUIPS. Head teachers are essential to an effective school. The quality of support and supervision they provide teachers has a direct bearing on how well children learn. QUIPS provided training sessions for them. An update to the old

Head Teachers Handbook was developed to help head teachers with their important but sometimes lonely task.



District Education Offices also benefited from QUIPS. The program worked with them to build their capacity to undertake monitoring and evaluation of education programs. QUIPS also introduced a grant mechanism to enable the DEO to spread the benefits of QUIPS to other schools in the district. This process provided a hands-on opportunity for district officers to gain experience in management and decision making. It also created a situation which allowed greater participation in determining how the DEO would respond to the needs of schools and communities. These learning experiences will enable district officers to be more responsive to schools, teachers and ultimately children.

CONCLUSION

USAID/Ghana's QUIPS program was a major undertaking. The GES is mandated to provide quality education to all the country's children. Support from USAID through the QUIPS program allowed the GES to move towards this important goal.

A final evaluation was initiated in March 2005 and completed three months later. Its goal was to go back to schools and communities to take a close look at what QUIPS had accomplished. Its findings include lessons learned as well as conclusions and recommendations. *A Look at Primary Education in Ghana: QUIPS Final Evaluation Report* reviews what worked under QUIPS, what did not and especially what could be done better to ensure that future primary education programs in Ghana continue to address the challenge of improving effectiveness of primary schooling in Ghana. This book is a summary of what the final evaluation learned about helping children in Ghana learn.